



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXX

SEPTEMBER, 1907

NUMBER 3

Editorial

WHAT OF THE LAYMAN?

THE REVOLT OF THE LAYMAN

While women are pleading for their rights in politics, men are pleading for their rights in the church. At least this is the claim of men's movements of various sorts. We are told that a new era is about to dawn for the church because the men are going to take hold of affairs. This enthusiasm for religious masculinity is certainly most commendable, and may have in it the potency of great good for the cause of religion. The prophets of Israel were with rare exceptions men, and dealt in virile fashion with the masculine side of life, with politics and the problems of the market place, with the evils that threatened the life of the nation, and the good that a religious national life would bring. And the prophet was often a layman, at least in the sense that he represented no priestly class, and came to his work from no scholastic training and by no formal ordination. Amos was a herdsman; John the Baptist, though of priestly blood, was not a priest. Even Jesus never joined the ranks of priests and scribes. If the new movement is to be a revival upon a large scale of the spirit of ancient prophetism, it has in it the promise of untold good to the church. Women and ministers have their place in the church also. But it is certainly well that we have come to a fresh recognition that the problems which are set before the church will not be solved without the active interest and co-operation of laymen.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE BUSINESS METHODS OF THE CHURCH

But if such a movement is to accomplish the good that is possible to it, it must recognize that religion is more than a branch of business.

Business methods are highly desirable in ecclesiastical management and in too many cases are woefully lacking, but the fault rarely lies with the ministers or with the women. Usually it is chargeable to the men, the official or self-appointed managers of the congregation, who conduct the business of the church in a very unbusinesslike way. If the men's movement can induce the men of the church to attend to the business side of the church in a righteous and efficient fashion, it will have performed a most estimable service. But if it exhausts itself in demanding that spiritual affairs are to be treated as a new type of promotion and in holding conventions in which men discourse on emancipation from women and ministers, it will have less significance than a convention of women planning emancipation from masculine voters. And what is more, a commercialized church would be worse than commercialized art.

INFLUENCE UPON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Moreover, quite as important as the introduction of business methods into the conduct of church affairs is the recognition on the part of the laymen that the church has something to do for religion as religion, and in the end depends for its effectiveness on its religion. Men's clubs are valuable adjuncts to the Sunday school, and it is highly desirable that men should cultivate the social graces under the auspices of religion; but a church is something more than a place for good-fellowship, and its mission includes duties even more important than finding homes for young men who have just come to the city from the country. It needs a constituency of influential lives—of brave thinkers and sacrificing givers of themselves. Is not the laity just now made up too largely of men whose interests are primarily commercial and of women whose interests are primarily social?

INFLUENCE ON THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH

But if the religious influence of the layman is the vital consideration, intimately connected with it and vitally affecting it is his intellectual attitude toward religious truth. Familiarity with business in the commercial sense is valuable to the church. But of itself it makes no man a prophet, and imparts no sympathy with the progressive and aggressive spirit that is characteristic of the true prophet and ought

always to characterize the church. For this reason, if for no other, the church needs editors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, physicians, to complement the energy of business men, and to bring a perhaps keener sympathy with the intellectual movements of the day. Men of business know that a reorganization of business methods is necessary every few years, but they are not always aware that the world of religious thought is passing through changes quite as significant as those which have come over the world of business. As a consequence it has come about that in too many cases the thoughtful minister, conscious like the prophet of old of having a message to the men of his day, finds himself out of sympathy with, if not opposed by, influential members of his congregation.

INFLUENCE UPON THE MINISTRY

If it were merely a matter of the comfort of the minister this would be a comparatively trifling matter. In reality, however, it is a question of the efficiency of the church itself. If the gospel is really to affect society, it must capture the intellectual forces as truly as it must appropriate successful commercial methods. The preacher is not a lecturer, but if he cannot preach in terms which are intelligible to men of professional training, to say nothing of the entire generation now so rapidly emerging from our schools and colleges, the church is likely to become of small social significance. The tendency among the choice young men in our colleges to abandon the ministry is likely to increase unless they come to feel that there is a place in the church for laymen who are thinking rather than merely listening while the minister preaches. The church will become of decreasing significance to society at large if the increasing influence of the laymen means that the pastor is permitted to do nothing but reproduce the theology taught him by men who have lost touch with the real world.

There are few ministers who want to preach eccentric doctrines, or whose loyalty to the essential truths of Christianity is open to question. But there are a great many who are keenly aware that the church is losing its hold upon a valuable element in the community—men and women who feel that the minister either does not know what is going on in the world of religious thought, or, knowing, does not dare to say exactly what he believes to be true. Often the minister

does know and would be glad to open up his mind completely to his congregation, but feels himself forced to speak with cautious tactfulness rather than with prophetic frankness and fervor because there are a great many laymen who are earnest in church work but who do not want him to preach anything other than the message they have always believed to be true. Particularly is this true of churches in which there are men who, having abandoned the ministry and having entered some sort of commercial activity, insist that the minister shall preach the very sort of doctrine their own career shows to be ineffective. If the church and its pastor are to be subjected to this sort of control there is little wonder that so many men of real significance in a community decline to have any part in the church. They feel the really formative forces of the changing order lie outside its membership.

TOTAL EFFECT UPON THE CHURCH

It is in championing the freedom of the pulpit, just as truly as in holding men's banquets, and furnishing ushers, and providing special programmes for Sunday services, that the men's movement can help the church. The best men of the community ought to be in the church, but they will not come in unless the church has something for them of really serious importance. If laymen will help the progressive preacher develop the church as one of the great formative influences of society—formative in the world of thought as truly as in the world of everyday morality—they will be of service both to today and to tomorrow. If they oppose such leadership, they will set a premium on inefficient, ill-prepared ministers and a church membership composed of men and women whose ideals are set by those past ages so unlike our own, in which was formed the theology that is called "safe," but is in reality one of the dangers that threaten the intellectual leadership of the church.

Is the new movement to bring a revival of the freedom and courage and virility that has always characterized the true prophet, or is it to be obstructionist and obscurantist? If it is to be the latter the introduction of so-called business methods into the work of the church or even an increase of contributions to missions will be dearly bought. If, the former, it is full of hope for the future.